



ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

Revolutions and Revolutionaries

Course Syllabus:
Spring 2013

POL 422
M 6:00-8:30
Morledge-Kimball 111

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Course Description:

Although we continue to hold out hope that political conflicts can be solved peacefully, the truth is that the modern era has been plagued with violence. Some regions of the world have been victims of virtually non-stop insurrection and instability. But such continual violence cannot be explained away as anomalous or as the product of a few madmen; there are deep sociopolitical and cultural causes of revolutionary movements, and their leaders have proven themselves to be shrewd and dynamic political thinkers.

Therefore what we will seek to accomplish in this course will be to uncover what might be called the revolutionary mindset, or perhaps even the revolutionary mind. Toward this end we will read a series of mostly primary texts, written by those who advocated for and participated in such revolutionary movements – including the works of Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, Lenin, Mao, and others.

To do so we will read these texts with a specific focus on the following aspects of revolution:

1. Precipitant factors and “triggering events”;
2. The importance (or lack thereof) of ideology;
3. Individual leaders and charismatic authority;
4. Mobilization, including the role of propaganda;
5. Operational aspects, such as tactics and targets;
6. The use of violence, and its limitations.

Ultimately we will seek to answer the question as to whether revolutionary violence is something that we can understand and one day transcend, or whether it is perhaps simply a natural byproduct of the modern society which must be dealt with as a geopolitical reality.

Required Readings:

Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*.
Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*.
Adolph Hitler, *Mein Kampf*.
Vladimir Lenin, *Essential Works of Lenin*.
Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks*.
Mao Tse-Tung, *On Practice and Contradiction*.
Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*.
James Stephens, *The Insurrection in Dublin*.
Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*.

Supplemental readings will be handed out in class or can be obtained online.

Course Policies:

The first requirement of each student is to understand that this is an academic environment and as such it is necessary that there is a high degree of civility, respect for fellow students, and respect for the material. You are expected to do *all* assigned readings, and you must participate in class if you hope to earn a passing grade.

1. Missed Classes: This course covers a great deal of material and meets just once a week; therefore repeated absences will not be tolerated. Students are allowed one absence, regardless of circumstance. Subsequent absences will result in your course grade being rescaled down by 1/3; i.e. a student with four absences will have their final grade reduced 1 point on a 4.0 scale.
2. Missed Assignments: If you do not turn in a graded assignment your maximum grade in the course will be rescaled along a 90/80/70/60 scale; i.e. if you fail to hand in a paper worth 20 percent of your grade, your highest possible grade in the class will be a B, regardless of your average on a 4-point scale.
3. Late Papers: Papers will lose one full letter grade per class session late. No exceptions.
4. Plagiarism and Cheating: Neither will be tolerated, and if a student is caught doing either they will fail the course and I will recommend to the Dean of Students that said student be expelled from school.
5. Electronic Devices: the use of any electronic device is strictly prohibited in this course. This includes e-readers, as I will not participate in the demise of the written word.
6. Email: I check my email daily but I prefer not to use it as a means of conversation. Email should be used only for quick, non-emergency questions and for setting up appointments for face-to-face meetings in my office. Also, for institutional as well as technological reasons, only communicate with me via your official @rocky.edu account.

Assessment Outcomes:

In this course, the following History & Political Science major assessment criteria are advanced:

1. Analyze, interpret, and critically evaluate major political issues and/or historical events;
2. Demonstrate familiarity with the major theories and thinkers in the field;
3. Understand the intellectual importance of academic research;
4. Frame research questions designed to produce independent and cogent analysis;
5. Assess, use, and synthesize different kinds of evidence from a variety of academic sources;
6. Understand the difference between opinions and substantiated scholarly claims;
7. Effectively utilize and appropriately cite academic sources;
8. Write papers essentially free of errors in grammar, mechanics, and spelling.

Graded Assignments

Weekly Book Reviews:

Each student is required to turn in a 1-2 page (12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, with one-inch margins) typewritten review on the readings and/or the film viewed for each week. These are to be combined synopses and analyses of the topics from that session's readings (you will be given a detailed handout as a guide). Additionally, they should demonstrate your ability to connect each author's work to the overarching ideas expressed in the course description.

These assignments will be graded and collectively amount to 20 percent of your final grade in the course, so careful reading is imperative. Also, because these assignments are intended to serve as facilitators for class discussion, late papers ***will not be accepted for any reason.***

Paper Proposal:

On March 11 (week nine of the semester) you are required to turn in a formal proposal for your final research paper. The proposal will comprise 15 percent of your course grade and must include the following:

- Working Title
- Abstract (250 words)
- Research Question(s)
- Outline
- Annotated Bibliographies (minimum 20 academic sources)

Individual Consultations:

Prior to the March 11 deadline for paper proposals, each student is required to meet with me one-on-one to discuss your paper topic and sources, so as to help you steer your research in a productive manner as well as to mitigate against possible problems with either topics or sources. I will also make myself available the week prior to when your drafts are due to offer further assistance and guidance so that these drafts are as comprehensive as possible – thus reducing significantly the amount of editing your paper will undergo before turning in its final version.

Complete Drafts:

On April 15 (week 14) you are required to submit a *complete* draft of your paper. This version is expected to be polished and worthy of submission for your final grade – yet it will be evaluated and critiqued before final submission, in order to ensure that to the greatest extent possible your final paper is of the highest intellectual caliber and demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of all course materials. Drafts will be graded on a simple pass/fail basis: all complete papers will receive an A, whereas papers that are not finished products will receive an F.

Research Paper:

Your grade in this class will be based primarily on one research paper which should be roughly 20-25 pages in length. Following the intellectual progression of the course, the paper will be an analytical research essay that asks a theoretical question related to the general topic of revolution and revolutionaries. While students will choose their own topics, the general parameters are as follows:

1. A political biography of an individual revolutionary.
2. A political history of a particular revolution or revolutionary movement.
3. A comparative analysis of multiple revolutionary movements along specific variables (such as ideology, mobilization, tactics and targets, etc.)
4. A thematic paper of the student's design, with the approval of the professor.

These papers are to rely almost exclusively on peer-reviewed, academically credible sources; please note that **internet web pages are not considered valid sources for academic research**. Papers will lose one full letter grade per website cited.

Note: papers should be composed in 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced, with normal one-inch margins and stapled. Papers will lose 1/3 of a grade if they exceed the stated limits, are not paginated properly, or are not stapled. Late papers will lose one full grade per day late.

Grading:

Papers will be graded on an A-F scale and will be averaged as follows:

Book Reviews:	20 percent
Paper Proposal:	15 percent
Complete Drafts:	15 percent
Final Paper:	30 percent
Participation:	20 percent

Grading Criteria:

These are the standards I adhere to when I grade essays. Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference, as do split grades (e.g. B-/C+). Grades are based on the evidence of the essay submitted, not on effort or time spent.

A

Excellent in every way (this is not the same as perfect). This is an ambitious, perceptive essay that grapples with interesting, complex ideas; responds discerningly to counter-arguments; and explores well-chosen evidence revealingly. The analysis enhances, rather than underscores, the reader's and writer's knowledge (it doesn't simply repeat what has been taught). There is a context for all the ideas; someone outside the class would be enriched, not confused, by reading the essay. Its introduction opens up, rather than flatly announces, its thesis. Its conclusion is something more than a summary. The language is clean, precise, often elegant. The reader should feel enlightened and educated for having read the paper. There's something new in your analysis, something perhaps only you could have written and explored, in this particular way. The writer's stake in the material is obvious.

B

A piece of writing that reaches high and achieves many of its aims. The ideas are solid and progressively explored but some thin patches require more analysis and/or some stray thoughts don't fit in. The language is generally clear and precise but occasionally not. The evidence is relevant, but there may be too little; the context for the evidence may not be sufficiently explored, so that I have to make some of the connections that the writer should have made clear for me. This is a solid essay whose reasoning and argument may nonetheless be rather routine (the limitation is largely conceptual).

C

A piece of writing that has real problems in one of these areas: conception (there's at least one main idea but it is fuzzy and difficult to understand); structure (non-linear development of your ideas); use of textual evidence (weak or non-existent -- the connections among the ideas and the evidence are not made and/or are presented without context, or are simple platitudes and generalizations); language (the sentences are often awkward, dependent on unexplained abstractions, sometimes contradict each other). The essay may not move forward but rather may repeat its main points, or it may touch upon many (and apparently unrelated) ideas without exploring any of them in sufficient depth and without a developmental flow. Punctuation, spelling, grammar, paragraphing, and transitions may be a problem.

- or- an essay that is largely plot summary or "interpretive summary" of the text, but is written without major problems.
- or- an essay that is chiefly a personal reaction to something. Well-written, but scant intellectual content
- mostly opinion.

D and F

These are efforts that are wildly shorter than they ought to be to grapple seriously with ideas.

- or- those that are extremely problematic in many of the areas mentioned above: aims, structure, use of evidence, language, etc.;
- or- those that do not come close to addressing the expectations of the essay assignment.

Participation:

The majority of class time will be devoted to discussion of the assigned readings. Discussion can include (but is not limited to) an analysis and/or critique of the author's position, a comparison of the assigned work to another text, or debate as to the meaning or merit of a given work (or particular points therein).

Class participation is evaluated on quality rather than quantity. Comments need not mirror the position of the author (or the professor). You are graded not on the "correctness" of your position, but rather on your analysis of the material and your ability to articulate your ideas. You don't have to be at the center of every debate, but students who make little or no effort to enter discussions will receive a lower participation grade. Discussion will become lively, heated even. Always respect the positions of others. When you disagree with someone, be sure to criticize the *idea* and not the person.

Participation will be graded according to the following criteria:

A

The student in this grade range arrives in class each day thoroughly prepared with comments and questions on the assigned reading. Comments reveal that the student has read carefully; this student occasionally initiates the discussion without waiting for the professor to do so. This student does not, however, try to dominate the class, but listens carefully to the remarks made by fellow class members, and responds as readily to these as to the instructor's questions.

B

The student in this grade range participates in most discussions, although not as fully or reliably as the student described above. There is evidence of having done the reading. This student pays attention to the comments of the other students.

C

The student in this grade range participates only intermittently, and is more willing to discuss broad, general questions than to engage in concrete analysis of an assigned text. Sometimes unprepared, this student lacks interest in the ideas of other members of the class, neglects to bring the proper text to class, and is often inattentive.

D or F

The student in this grade range seldom if ever participates.

Things that lower your participation grade:

- * Not paying attention in class
- * A ringing cellphone
- * Talking to your neighbor or holding conversations separate from the class discussion
- * A student who is seen using their phone for any reason will receive an F as their final grade in the course

NOTE: Unlike paper grades, participation will *not* be given plus/minus or split grades, and your final grade is weighted in a manner such as to make it impossible for you to receive an A for the course if your participation grade is not an A.

Semester Schedule:

Week 1:

1/7

Introduction and Course Outline

Week 2:

1/14

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*

Week 3:

1/21

Martin Luther the King Holiday

Week 4:

1/28

Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Volume II, Chapters I-V, XI, Conclusion

Week 5:

2/4

Malcolm X, *Malcolm X Speaks*, Chapters I-IV, XII

Week 6:

2/11

Stephens, *The Insurrection in Dublin*

Week 7:

2/18

Lenin, "The State and Revolution."

Week 8:

2/25

Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed*, Introduction, Chapters 1, 3, 5 (66-76), 7 (109-128), 10 (194-200), 11

3/4-3/8

Midterm Break

Week 9:

3/11

**WORKING TITLES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, OUTLINES, AND
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE**
(minimum 20 academic sources)

Week 10:

3/18

Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*

Week 11:

3/25

Mao, *On Practice and Contradiction*, Chapters 1-3, 5, 7, 12

Week 12:

4/1

Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, Introduction, Preface, Chapters 1, 2, Conclusion

Week 13:

4/8

Easter Break

Week 14:

4/15

DRAFTS DUE

Week 15:

4/22

Drafts Returned

4/29

REVISED RESEARCH PAPERS DUE